



**Address by the President of the Council of the
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),
Mr. Roberto Kobeh González,
to the 61st Annual Meeting and Convention of
the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA)**

(Orlando, Florida, 6 October 2008)

It is a great pleasure for me to address the opening of the 61st Annual Meeting and Convention of the NBAA. To take part in the world's largest and most important annual gathering of the business aviation community is a unique opportunity to reflect on key issues facing the global air transport system and to suggest what might be done to make sure it continues to grow in a safe, secure, efficient and sustainable manner.

Let me begin by reasserting that ICAO considers business aviation to be a major partner of the international aviation community. With over 25,000 turbine aircraft operated by over 17,000 companies in an expanding market, you represent a significant proportion of aircraft movements and activities worldwide. It is therefore very important for the business aviation community to be fully involved in the deliberations of ICAO's many Panels, Committees, Working Groups and Conferences.

As the United Nations agency responsible for developing and adopting standards for international civil aviation, ICAO must be aware of the most current views of all stakeholders in order to maintain a global regulatory framework that responds to the real needs of users. We are sincerely grateful to the International Business Aviation Council (IBAC) for having contributed to this global effort on your behalf. As an observer to ICAO Assemblies and meetings, IBAC has been forthcoming in communicating the vision and concerns of business aviation. Based on this track record, I am sure our relationship will flourish even more in the future, as it surely must. We have many great challenges to address together, beginning with safety.

Safety is and will always be priority number one for ICAO, as I know it is for you given the excellent safety record of business aviation. In the future, ICAO will continue to favour technical and operational improvements, while moving ahead in a more holistic manner, taking into account economic, social and geopolitical realities. We are increasingly tackling safety issues in an integrated fashion, addressing problems at source and investing precious resources where they are most likely to produce concrete and lasting results.

Our overall strategy for improving aviation safety is contained in the ICAO Global Aviation Safety Plan – the GASP. It is a performance-based approach which focuses energies and resources on activities that provide the highest return for increasing safety. The GASP also reflects a remarkable level of cooperation with all major stakeholders, by incorporating in the document the Global Aviation Safety Roadmap developed by the air transport industry, in cooperation with ICAO.

Another example of how ICAO can work in partnership with the industry is the adoption earlier this year by the Organization of a modernized set of standards applicable to the operation of general aviation aircraft. The new regulations resulted from a comprehensive industry proposal that, after careful analysis, was essentially as you had originally submitted.

I also commend the leadership position taken by the business aviation community in the development and implementation of Safety Management Systems. SMS represents the best way of responding to the need for results-based supervision of personnel and functions with a relatively small workforce. SMS application was introduced early by your industry through the International Standard for Business Aircraft Operations and from my understanding, it has been a success.

Although these joint efforts are very constructive, we must not stop there. The last session of the ICAO Assembly agreed with IBAC's proposal for improved safety statistics for general aviation. At ICAO, we do a good job at collecting data for commercial operations, but the same cannot be said for general aviation. We are definitely seeking ways to improve in this area.

Let me now turn to aviation security for a moment.

Unlike safety, which can be largely circumscribed, security involves acts of unlawful interference from persons who can strike anytime, anywhere, and for any reason. In managing security issues, governments have the difficult and unenviable task of balancing the need for maintaining and encouraging anti-terrorist vigilance while, at the same time, putting in place workable security measures that do not compromise the efficiency of the air transport sector. The delicate nature of this exercise is compounded by the fact that considerable economic damage can occur even when terrorist plans are foiled. The August 2006 alleged terrorist plot in the United Kingdom, potentially involving liquids used as explosives, emphasized the vulnerability of the global air transport system and the need to remain vigilant.

Here again, business aviation has been active in the ICAO Aviation Security Panel, contributing valuable input to help in understanding that security for business aviation aircraft must be provided differently from the scheduled commercial air transport operations that depart from and arrive at major terminal buildings. It is by working together that we will find ways and means of providing secure air transport in an intelligent and practical way. For this support, I also commend IBAC and the business aviation community.

The third major area of cooperation for ICAO and IBAC is airspace management and access to airports. Airspace and airport congestion translates into access restrictions for business aviation, particularly at capacity constrained locations. This is the reality for many of you. So how do we solve it?

One way is through the development and implementation of an interoperable and seamless global Air Traffic Management (ATM) system – a system that applies to all users, during all phases of flight, and that meets agreed levels of safety, provides for optimum economic operations, is environmentally sustainable and meets national security requirements. That is progressing well under ICAO's Operational Concept, Global Air Navigation Plan and framework for a performance-based transition. Just a few weeks ago, we held a forum on the integration and harmonization of the United States' NextGen and the European SESAR projects into the global ATM framework. A number of other countries also presented their options for pushing forward on increasing the efficiency of our skies.

Challenging issues remain, as was demonstrated at another recent meeting, this one on the economics for airports and the air navigation system. You clearly made us aware of your considerable interest and concern related to charging issues. You want fair and reasonable policies continued, and you would like existing charging formulas retained. I have no doubt that your case will be considered carefully as we further refine ICAO policies.

To conclude my presentation this morning, I would like to review ICAO's position on a subject of vital concern to all of us – the impact of aviation on the environment.

The fourth Report of the IPCC – the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – confirms that climate change is real and that most of the observed rise in global average temperatures since the mid 20th century is very likely due to an increase in greenhouse gas concentration from human activity. Global aviation is estimated to account for about 2 percent of human produced CO₂, the major greenhouse gas. It is true that aircraft today are about 70 percent more fuel efficient than they were 30 years ago and newer models on the production line are even more efficient.

The problem is growth. In spite of the current drop in traffic due to rising fuel prices, mid to long-term projections are for an increase in traffic, which would outpace our capacity for bringing down emissions. The solution lies in the development of a combination of technical, operational and market-based measures, under the leadership of ICAO.

The 36th Session of the ICAO Assembly in 2007 created a special group to recommend to ICAO an aggressive programme of action on international aviation and climate change. The recommendations of the group are to be reviewed at a high-level meeting of the Organization in 2009, in time for consideration by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change which will meet in December of next year to decide on a post-Kyoto agreement.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, business aviation is an integral part of the world aviation community and has a vital role to play in ensuring the integrity of a mode of transportation that has become essential to our modern way of life. ICAO acknowledges with gratitude the contribution of IBAC to this global enterprise and looks forward to pursuing with all of you our collective goals and aspirations.

I thank you for your kind invitation and wish you a productive meeting and convention.